



NEWS FROM

Congressman

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BUYER  
REPORT OF MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE  
FISCAL YEAR 2001 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT**

The Military Personnel Subcommittee report before the committee addresses two principal challenges.

The first challenge was to reform the Defense Health Program. In meeting that challenge, the subcommittee fulfilled the commitment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to “fix” the TRICARE system. They sought, and we agreed fully, that the barriers to an effective TRICARE system had to be removed so that health care could promote – not detract from — readiness, recruiting and retention

Thus, the subcommittee removes a number of real barriers to an effective TRICARE system, and generates savings that can be redirected to pay for future benefits. Moreover, the health care proposals made here today for active and retired military personnel and their families go well beyond the reforms contained in the budget request. In addition, I will be offering an amendment later that will extend to 2003 the demonstration programs now underway to provide health care for Medicare-eligible military retirees.

The second challenge that the subcommittee met was to help sustain the viability of the all-volunteer military. We have built upon the substantial committee effort last year that made major reforms to military pay and benefits and retirement. The result, this year, is a series of recommendations for pay, bonuses and benefits that not only also continue the broad-based approach that the committee endorsed last year, but also target certain specific problems.

What the subcommittee is recommending to you is a strong, comprehensive set of initiatives that go to the heart of fixing some of the toughest problems confronting our military today.

Beyond the points I have raised, I say to all that this subcommittee report again represents a bipartisan effort. Neil Abercrombie and I have worked closely and we have had great support from the subcommittee members. I thank Neil for his efforts on behalf of the men and women who are serving, and who have served in the nations armed forces.

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